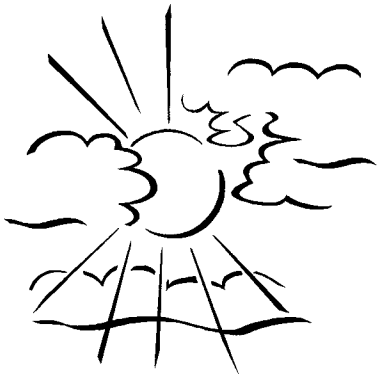


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Thursday, March 23, 2006

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TOPIC	PAGE
*Holland Case	2-5
Foster Care	6-8
Adult Services	9
Group Day Care Homes	10
Abuse/Neglect	11-20
Homeless	21-23
Unemployment Rate	24-26
*Health Care	27-28
Juveniles	29
*House Appropriations	30
Governor's News Release	31

Testimony comes in murder case

March 23, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK

Detroit Free Press

MASON -- Nearly one month after their adopted son Ricky disappeared, police secretly placed tracking devices on Lisa and Tim Holland's vehicles, the lead detective in the case said Wednesday.

Authorities planted the devices Aug. 1 on Tim Holland's Chevrolet S-10 pickup and Lisa's white minivan, Ingham County Sheriff's Detective Roy Holliday testified during the preliminary examination for the Hollands, who each are charged with murder and first-degree child abuse. And on Sept. 5, Holliday said police noted that the pickup was parked for a half-hour along Dennis Road in Wheatfield Township, about 9 miles north of where Ricky's body was later discovered.

Authorities searched near the Dennis Road field shortly after that, hoping to find Ricky's body. But it would be nearly five months before Tim Holland would lead them to the 7-year-old boy's skeletal remains in a wetland area farther south.

The testimony in 55th District Court in Mason came as Lisa Holland's lawyer, Andrew Abood, tried to shift the blame for Ricky's death to her husband. The Hollands each accuse one another of killing the boy.

Over the frequent objections of one of Tim Holland's attorneys and Ingham County Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency, Abood also suggested that Tim Holland's job as a civilian counterintelligence specialist for the U.S. Army gave him training to be deceptive. He also implied that Holland "created a ruse" in trying to cover up Ricky's accidental death by moving the boy's body from the Dennis Road field to the spot farther south.

Abood tried to establish that Holland was an effective liar by saying he gave police a made-up story about his wife's attempt to kill him. Lisa Holland was arrested Jan. 26, after Tim Holland told police she tried to kill him in November by throwing an electric hair dryer into the shower with him.

She was charged with felonious assault, but the charge was dismissed on Feb. 2 after Abood argued that the cord on the hair dryer was too short to have been plugged into the electrical outlet and thrown into the shower. However, she still faces a misdemeanor domestic violence charge from a Jan. 25 incident that prompted Tim Holland to go to police.

In other developments Wednesday, Ferency apologized to Tim Holland for a possible hoax that led him to believe for a short time Tuesday that his father, Wildon Holland, had died. Ferency told Tim Holland, 37, he was sorry the Ingham County Sheriff's Office falsely told him that his father had died when in fact he was still living.

He promised an investigation, adding that he was not sure how the misinformation came to the sheriff's office.

After hearing the news of his father's death, Tim Holland called the family's home in Dewitt. His father answered the phone. The preliminary examination is scheduled to continue Tuesday and Wednesday and another four days in mid-April.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

Pathologist's testimony not allowed at hearing

Ruling a setback for prosecutors in Holland case

*By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal
March 23, 2006*

MASON - In a setback for prosecutors, a judge ruled Wednesday a forensic pathologist could not compare Ricky Holland's autopsy results with statements Tim Holland made to police.

Judge Rosemarie Aquilina stuck with her earlier decision that the statements made by Tim Holland - who with his wife, Lisa, is charged with killing Ricky - could not be used as evidence against either parent.

Tim Holland, in a Jan. 27 interview, told investigators his wife killed their 7-year-old son by striking him on the head with a hammer, according to court records.

The decision came during the 10th day of the Hollands' preliminary hearing, which will determine whether the murder case against Tim and Lisa Holland advances to trial. The Hollands, who have accused each other of killing Ricky, also are charged with first-degree child abuse.

Dr. Joyce deJong, a forensic pathologist at Sparrow Hospital, took the stand last week and described fractures to Ricky's upper body and face, which she said happened around the time of death.

She was about to testify about whether the Hollands' statements to police were consistent with her findings, but defense attorneys objected, leading to Aquilina's ruling.

"She has reviewed information that is not admissible," the judge said.

Also Wednesday, defense attorneys cross-examined Ingham County sheriff's Detective Sgt. Roy Holliday.

Lisa Holland's co-counsel Andrew Abood asked Holliday if Ricky's death could have been an accident that Tim Holland, in a panic, tried to cover up.

Holliday said he had ruled out that possibility.

The detective also testified that about a month after Ricky was reported missing, police placed tracking devices on the Hollands' vehicles. Officers searched areas near where the cars traveled over the next several weeks.

About seven months after he reported Ricky missing, Tim Holland led police to the marshlike spot where the boy's remains - inside two garbage bags - were partially submerged in water.

Under questioning from Tim Holland's co-counsel, Scott Mertens, Holliday said Tim Holland might have been covering up something his wife had done.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

A preliminary hearing for Tim and Lisa Holland - charged with killing their 7-year-old adopted son, Ricky - began Feb. 28 in the 55th District Court in Mason. The hearing will determine whether there is enough evidence to advance the case to trial.

Hearing timeline:

- Feb. 28: A neighbor of the Hollands testified Ricky overheard his parents "saying they wished they didn't have him." Attorneys for Lisa Holland challenged the neighbor's testimony, saying it was different than what he earlier told police. Also that day, a child psychiatrist who diagnosed Ricky with attention-deficit (hyperactivity) disorder and

bipolar mood disorder testified he saw no evidence of abuse.

- March 1: An Ingham County sheriff's detective testified Lisa Holland failed to give police an account of her activities the day before Ricky Holland was reported missing. The detective, under questioning from defense attorneys, acknowledged he had not found any forensic evidence - blood, DNA or fingerprints - linking Lisa Holland to Ricky's disappearance.

- March 2: A school nurse where Ricky attended grade school testified the boy screamed, "Please don't make me go home, nurse. Please don't make me go home" when his mother, Lisa Holland, came to pick him up one day at school. But under cross-examination, the nurse said Ricky never told her his parents hurt him. The nurse also said she once found coin-sized bruises on Ricky's upper body and reported the incident to Child Protective Services.

- March 3: A school psychologist and social worker who evaluated Ricky Holland while he attended school in Jackson said they did not suspect anyone was abusing him. Social worker Linda Spisak also testified she didn't think Ricky had severe emotional or developmental problems, despite what Lisa Holland continually told her. Prosecutors said in court that the Hollands misstated and exaggerated Ricky's symptoms and conditions - part of a pattern of emotional abuse.

- March 6: A fellow inmate at the Ingham County Jail testified that Lisa Holland told her she killed Ricky by hitting him on the head with a hammer. Lisa Holland's co-counsel Andrew Abood repeatedly challenged the credibility of the inmate, Crystal Mountain, at one point calling her a "jailhouse snitch." Also, Ricky's first-grade teacher, Peggy Cox, said while she did not suspect he was being abused, she did believe Lisa Holland was intentionally humiliating the boy.

- March 10: Todd Fenton, a forensic anthropologist at Michigan State University who examined Ricky's remains, testified that a fracture to Ricky's face showed signs of healing and had occurred at least two weeks before he died. Fenton also testified that Ricky's skeleton indicated he was not developing properly, possibly indicating Ricky was not receiving proper nutrition. Under questioning from Tim Holland's attorney, Frank Reynolds, Fenton admitted that people grow at different rates.

- March 13: Dr. Joyce deJong, a forensic pathologist at Sparrow Hospital, testified that there was no way to know whether Ricky was alive or dead when he was wrapped in a bedsheet and placed inside two plastic garbage bags. Testimony also revealed that Tim Holland told police he drove the remains in the back of a pickup to a wetland area in rural Ingham County.

- March 17: In a Jan. 26 videotaped interview with police, Lisa Holland said her husband's moods could swing like a pendulum, and he may have strangled or suffocated Ricky after he did something to set him off. "I think Tim snapped," she said. Later, an Ingham County sheriff's detective told defense attorneys that investigators had not ruled out either parent as a suspect in the months before the arrests.

- March 21: Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency said the Hollands engaged in "an elaborate, well-conceived ruse" to cover up Ricky's death and showed video of TV interviews from July 2005, in which the Hollands ask for help in finding their son. Also, defense attorneys succeeded in barring the testimony of a child abuse expert who reviewed the case at prosecutors' request.

- March 22: In a setback for prosecutors, a judge ruled a forensic pathologist could not compare Ricky Holland's autopsy results with statements Tim Holland made to police.

Also, an attorney for Lisa Holland introduced a theory that Ricky's death could have been an accident that Tim Holland, in a panic, tried to cover up.

Source: LSJ research

Kids can flourish with compassionate foster parents

MICHIANA POINT OF VIEW

MARTIN L. MITCHELL

Southbend Tribune.com

March 22, 2006 6:59AM

The death of a child is one death too many. While we grieve for 7-year-old Ricky Holland of Michigan (Tribune, March 1), and all of the other children hurt by those who are entrusted with their care, we must find the strength to remember that within tragedy lies opportunity. It's not a simple task, for it requires us to look deep within ourselves and ask "What am I doing to advocate for those whose voices are so small?"

Ricky's saga has touched many lives in a very tangible way. Hundreds of caring individuals gathered to search for Ricky when he was reported missing. Thousands have followed the news stories about him, kept him in their thoughts and prayed for his safe return. But there's still much more to be done. Now is the time to collectively channel that same urgency and concern into action. As citizens of courage and compassion, we are called to impact the lives of children by providing positive environments where they can flourish.

There is always a need for capable, loving foster parents. There are few greater gifts that can be given to a child who has experienced abuse and neglect than the gift of a home. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there were more than 523,000 foster care children across America in desperate need of a safe home, where love is a value, not a reward, and where the necessities are provided by well-trained and well-intentioned people of character. Foster parents are needed to build relationships with children that encourage them to find their strengths and use them to become productive adults. There are many agencies across the country that would provide more information on what it takes to become a foster parent. The opportunity lies with you to become the parent these children deserve.

Child advocacy organizations want people's help. There are many ways people can raise their voice for children. From a local community organization to national groups, there is no doubt that people will find an organization with the same values as themselves and a mission that inspires them. These groups welcome help in many forms, from letter writing to event participation, volunteerism to professional careerism. Thousands of children's lives are transformed every day by the caring professionals at these organizations. Find a child advocacy organization to partner with today and begin positively impacting the lives of children forever.

Legislators and agencies need our commitment. Children cannot cast a vote to send their message. It is imperative that all good citizens be their voice. Learn about the issues by contacting local representatives. Discover the needs of America's foster care children by researching the agencies that provide services to them. The services provided to children in need are ultimately services being provided to the people. These services improve schools and neighborhoods. Be an informed consumer. Currently, there are dozens of bills that are being introduced that affect the quality of lives for America's children. To follow these bills, log on to Children's Defense Fund's comprehensive Web site (www.childrensdefense.org). Support legislation and initiatives that provide excellent and efficient service to our children.

The responsibility of protecting children like Ricky Holland lies with every citizen. It's easy to read about such tragedies and be overwhelmed by the depth of what needs to be done to ensure the safety and well-being of every child in the United States. The ultimate truth is that there is something each and every one of us can do to change the lives of troubled children for the better, and the help we can give can't wait.

Martin L. Mitchell is president and chief executive officer of Starr Commonwealth, a 93-year-old national children's organization that provides foster care services in Michigan and Ohio. It is located in Albion, Mich.

Funds out for foster care

Julie Knauf

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MANISTIQUE — It's only the middle of the 2005-06 fiscal year, but Schoolcraft County Juvenile Court placement funds are "entirely out," said Tim Noble, juvenile officer. Beginning in October 2005, the original budget for child care case funds was \$140,000, with approximately \$72,000 covering youth placement. Placement funds are now depleted due to especially expensive cases putting youth in correctional facilities or foster care.

During a Schoolcraft County Board meeting Tuesday, Noble requested the county provide \$60,000 to cover expenses associated with youth placements. The money would last until the end of the fiscal year in October 2006.

Funds are covered equally by Schoolcraft County and the state. As a result, the state will reimburse the county \$30,000 at a later date, said Noble.

See FUNDS on page 5A

Funds

Continued from page 1A

In the meantime, there is a "lag period" before the state is expected to send the county more money. Placement funds are "coming up short," and bills must be paid, said Noble.

It's impossible to predict when neglect cases, in particular, will arise and they are especially costly, he said. Noble anticipates possibly many more occurring in the future.

Even without any new cases, Noble predicts the placement funds would need approximately \$50,000 to cover expenses until October.

County commissioners agreed to meet with Noble later this week and discuss plans to provide funds.

In other business, the board:

- discussed a meeting held March 14 during which State Rep. Stephen Adamini and State Sen. Mike Prusi met with Schoolcraft County officials and addressed concerns about Michigan's Qualified Voter File (QVF). The computer software program has been causing election confusion in the county. Adamini and Prusi agreed to take county officials' complaints about the software to the state level. They plan to return to Schoolcraft County at a later date.

- approved appointments to the Brownfield Authority for Dan McKinney and Terri Evonich.

*Schoolcraft County Press
Wednesday March 22, 2006*

Wayne County

Mayors deliver food and cheer to elderly people

Harper Woods, Pointes officials take part in event

BY SHABINA S. KHATRI
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER
March 23, 2006

When his grandmother's arthritis got so bad that she could no longer cook, Meals on Wheels helped her, recalled James Farquhar, mayor of Grosse Pointe Farms.

The least he could do is return the favor.

Farquhar did that Wednesday when he and 485 mayors across the nation took part in the first Mayor for Meals Day, an effort to draw attention to the problem of hunger among elderly people, sponsored by the Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Before delivering meals to more than 100 homebound seniors in their cities, officials from Harper Woods and the five Pointes spent a surprise lunch with seniors at the Services for Older Citizens center in Grosse Pointe.

The event was part of the Food and Friendship Program, an offshoot of Meals on Wheels that provides a forum for elderly residents to socialize while eating a free lunch.

"She's bending my ear already," Farquhar joked, referring to a Grosse Pointe Farms resident who said a sidewalk near her home had fallen into disrepair. Others he ate with praised the police and fire services, saying the prompt response times made living alone seem less scary.

Many residents older than 60 who are unable to drive participate in the home-delivery program for reasons besides nourishment, said Mary Rose Nelson, program director.

"One woman told me, 'I don't care for the meal, but I enjoy the company,' " Nelson said, referring to deliveries she made for the program. "That volunteer may be the only person they see all day."

About 60 volunteers deliver hot lunches to seniors in the Pointes and Harper Woods from Monday to Saturday. The turnaround time for a meal is about 24 hours, Nelson said.

"If someone calls us today, they'll have a meal ready for them tomorrow," she said.

But not all cities are so lucky. Nationwide, about four of 10 nutrition programs that feed elderly people have waiting lists because of a lack of funding and volunteers, according to the Meals on Wheels Web site.

With the first wave of baby boomers turning 65 in 2011, officials expect the problem of hunger among elderly people to get worse.

"We have to remember them, too," said Ken Poynter, mayor of Harper Woods. He said he tries to visit his city's senior center on a regular basis to stay connected to the needs of those residents.

"We're all going to be seniors at some point," he said.

Residents can help fight senior hunger by donating their time and money to programs like Meals on Wheels, Nelson said.

For more information on the service, go to www.mowaa.org or call 313-882-9600.
Contact **SHABINA S. KHATRI** at 586-469-8087 or skhatri@freepress.com.

Council kills ban on home day care

Troy officials will study regulations on residential facilities that serve as many as 12 children.

*Joe Menard / The Detroit News
March 22, 2006*

TROY -- Group day care homes will be allowed to continue in residential areas of the city, but will be restricted to minimize their impact on their neighborhoods.

The Troy City Council on Monday voted 6-1 to reject a proposed ban on home-based day cares serving seven to 12 children. The council will meet next week to discuss what kinds of restrictions to place on the homes, such as operating hours, safety inspections and fencing requirements.

The decision ends two years of legal limbo for day care providers, who have been licensed by the state to operate since 1973 but forbidden by local zoning laws that prohibit hired help in home businesses.

"I feel a sense of relief, but still feel cautious," said Sharon Schafer, who has operated a group day care since 1990. "I think we're going down the right road."

Supporters of the city's 19 group day care homes worry that the city will pass restrictions recommended by the Planning Commission which include minimum lot sizes of a half acre and 6-foot-tall privacy fences. Four or fewer of the group day care homes would meet those requirements, city officials said.

"The state has regulations in place, and I don't think we need to add to that," said Councilwoman Cristina Broomfield. "We've had a few isolated complaints."

Troy resident C.J. Chung -- who lives next to a group day care -- says the homes are a problem.

"The noise problem is a big problem," said Chung, who teaches evening classes at Lawrence Technological University and sleeps during the day.

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[From the Lansing State Journal]

Mother, boyfriend charged in boy's death

2-year-old Jalyn Daniel died of pneumonia in May

By Susan Vela

Lansing State Journal

Published March 23, 2006

Two-year-old Jalyn Daniel may have been murdered last spring by his mother, Cynthia Daniel, and her live-in boyfriend, Samuel Courtland, Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said Wednesday.

Although the official cause of death was pneumonia, Dunnings said abuse factored into the child's death and was tragically more serious than the scratches and bruises found on the child's torso. Jalyn was found not breathing in his mother's duplex home, at 6217 Grovenburg Road, last May.

Abuse can lead to health problems, said Dunnings, who would not elaborate on evidence discovered over the past months.

Daniel, 30, and Courtland, 31, were arrested Wednesday morning, Lansing Police Chief Mark Alley said.

Both face an open murder charge, which could mean life in prison without parole if convicted. They are being held without bond. In addition, Daniel faces a first-degree child abuse charge. Courtland faces first- and second-degree child abuse charges. The two could not be reached for comment Wednesday. It was not clear if they had retained counsel.

When medical personnel arrived at Jalyn's home last May, they performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the boy. The child was pronounced dead at a local hospital. Soon after, police said Jalyn had died a suspicious death and the Family Independence Agency removed his two siblings from the Grovenburg Road residence.

Daniel and Courtland were suspected of harming Jalyn from the start, Dunnings said.

However, he said that it took time to arrest them because of the inherent challenge of connecting a pneumonia death to murder.

Dunnings said child abuse expert witnesses will have an important role in his prosecution of the case. "We're going to be able to do what we need to do in court," he said.

Former neighbors of Daniel and Courtland said they weren't aware of any abuse happening at the home. They said they were not even sure if either still lived there.

Contact Susan Vela at 702-4248 or svela@lsj.com.

Mom faces felony for infant's death

Thursday, March 23, 2006

By Theresa D. McClellan

The Grand Rapids Press

GREENVILLE -- A 22-year-old Greenville mother is behind bars, facing felony charges in the death of her 3-month-old daughter.

Grace Vivian Hunt was in the Montcalm County Jail on charges of open murder and first-degree murder. If convicted, she faces up to life in prison.

Her baby girl, Jadelyn Schenden, died in January. Authorities arrested Hunt this week and arraigned her on Wednesday.

The details of the case were not revealed, and the Montcalm County Prosecutor's office would not discuss the charges.

The infant's father has not been charged.

According to court records, there was an open neglect case involving the infant. The Department of Social Services filed the petition, according to court records.

Some neighbors said they remembered when the baby died in January and authorities came to the apartment Hunt shared with a man and two other children.

They remembered hearing it was a crib death.

"There were three ambulances and at least six police cars. They had a sympathy card go around the park and donate money," said neighbor Connie Garwold.

Lisa Pallick, another neighbor, remembers watching the man in the parking lot. "He was going crazy, he was holding his hands on his head and crying," 24-year-old Pallick said.

"I knew it brung a tear to my eye not knowing what was going on and seeing them carry a baby out," Pallick said.

Hunt was being held on a \$75,000 bond. Her preliminary hearing is set for April 4.

THE TOUCH THAT HURTS: Tracking convicted sex offenders

Part I of a series

By **JOE BOOMGAARD**

Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

March 21, 2006

Sex crimes, the perpetrators and their victims may be taboo topics, reserved for the police blotter or the courts report in this newspaper. Occasionally, a perpetrator is someone of high profile in the community, and his or her name gets mentioned following an arrest and conviction.

When the perpetrator who was someone familiar and trusted is arrested or convicted, everyone gasps and expresses shock and fear.

What's a parent or concerned individual to do?

For the parent, their neighbor, and others wanting to be vigilant, there are many resources to find out who those convicted of sex crimes are and where they live in our community.

Web site causes stir

A Web site allowing people to type in an address and see a map of nearby sex offenders in their area blazed through many people's e-mail accounts in the past month. Nervous, concerned parents sheepishly typed in their addresses in the hopes that their neighbor — or someone they knew — was not on the list.

The Family Watchdog Web site, www.familywatchdog.us, says the group gets its information from public sex offender databases, like Michigan's Public Sex Offender Registry. Published by the Michigan State Police, MIPSOR is available both online at www.mipsor.state.mi.us and at local law enforcement agencies. The Family Watchdog Web site shows a map of the area surrounding the address and indicates with color-keyed dots where sex offenders live and what type of sex crime they committed — all juicy and practical information.

The site takes the MIPSOR one step further and provides a visual reference where sex offenders live in relation to a typed-in address.

MIPSOR allows for sex offender searches by ZIP code and name, and in most cases, provides a photo of the offender. The site also describes the technical crime for which the person was convicted

Lt. Kevin Leavitt, Post Commander of the Michigan State Police Hart post, said he could not verify the accuracy of the Family Watchdog Web site and encouraged residents to only trust the Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry.

"If you're concerned, come in to look at our information," Leavitt said. "I think it's a great tool for law enforcement and for citizens to check out who lives in their community."

Offender registration laws

Sex offenders on the MIPSOR list have to register at least once per year. Those convicted of felony sex crimes must verify their address quarterly, while those convicted of misdemeanor sex crimes must register annually.

Michigan laws call for two forms of sex offender registration, one public and one only available to law enforcement.

The Sex Offenders Registration (SOR) Act requires all offenders to register their addresses with law enforcement after conviction and prior to sentencing. All offenders convicted of a felony-listed offense must report to a local law enforcement agency to verify their address during the first 15 days of January, April, July, and October. Offenders remain in the registry for 25 years or life, depending on the conviction. Misdemeanor-listed offenders must verify in the first 15 days of January each year.

Michigan laws call for two forms of sex offender registration, one public and one only available to law enforcement.

In 1996, the Public Sex Offender Registry was established, and in 1999, the registry went online, allowing for searches by ZIP code or name and approximate age to identify registered sex offenders.

Certain offenders — juveniles and those who have completed probation — are exempt from the public list but remain on the SOR.

In addition, an e-mail sex offender notification law was passed by the Michigan legislature and was signed into law March 2.

The new law, which takes effect January 2007, allows residents to sign up for an e-mail notification when a sex offender moves into their area. The design of the new system is yet to be worked out.

The Michigan State Police also conducts an annual sweep, called Operation Verify, to ensure sex offenders are living at their registered addresses.

“Here at Hart, along with Mason County Sheriff and Oceana County Sheriff and local agencies, we continue to look at the system to see if there are any offenders who change address without notifying us. We actively pursue those cases,” Leavitt said.

Leavitt said troopers who come in contact with sex offenders throughout the regular course of business — such as traffic stops — check to ensure the offender is living where he or she claims.

“When we run a background check, the system will pop up that they are a sex offender and we verify their address by asking them questions, checking their drivers license, and so on,” Leavitt said.

“We do the sweeps — quite frequently now — but one trooper, Tpr. Russ Carston, has really taken this program under his wing, and he does a good job of it. If you name a sex offender in your area, he could probably tell you his or her address and what they did.”

School safety zones, and one blind spot?

In 2005, the Michigan Legislature passed Public Acts 121, 126 and 127 which prohibit sex offenders from residing, working or loitering within a “school safety zone,” defined as an area that lies 1,000 feet or less from a school property. Offenders who worked or resided within a school safety zone before Jan. 1, 2006 are exempted.

Two sex offenders listed in public registry in the 49431 ZIP code live within the school safety zone, according to measurements taken by the Ludington Daily News using GPS technology. These offenders are grandfathered in under the new law and are not in violation.

What the safety zone does not cover may surprise you.

The law does not restrict sex offenders around licensed day care centers.

In February, a cross reference of the list of sex offenders on the Family Watchdog Web site and state list of licensed day care centers in the 49431 ZIP code found sex offenders living within a quarter of a mile of 27 of the 57 licensed day care centers. Two facilities had listed offenders involving minors within a quarter of a mile, according to the Web site.

Mason County Sheriff Laude Hartrum said sex offenders living near day care providers are “definitely an issue that needs to be addressed.”

“As sheriff, I try to do everything I can to keep kids safe, and I think this is a serious issue, but in some respects, it’s a question best answered by the legislature,” Hartrum said.

Ludington Police Chief Mark Barnett agreed.

“Ultimately, the legislature would have to decide what makes sense, but every law has to pass a court test.

The court has to take a little bit different perspective considering the constitutionality for all involved,” Barnett said. “Philosophically, it’s a no-brainer that there should be some distance that sex offenders have to maintain, but part of problem is having a definitive list of where these places are.”

Leavitt, Hartrum and Barnett said the key to keeping children safe is awareness.

“I think parents need to know where their kids are at all times, and they need to know who their neighbors are,” Hartrum said. “They need to use good common sense and not let kids get into a vulnerable position.”

Hartrum said he thought the sex offender registry is “a good tool” for parents to use to be vigilant about their neighbors.

“The registry is in place to give parents more tools to protect their kids. Ultimately, law enforcement can only do so much, and it’s incumbent on parents to take an active role in protecting kids from sexual predators whether in their neighborhood or on the Internet,” Hartrum said.

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THE TOUCH THAT HURTS: Making the case against abusers

Part II of a series

By JOE BOOMGAARD

Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

March 22, 2006

Sexual abuse is a crime

Law enforcement has the responsibility to investigate crimes and help victims of crime find justice. In the investigation of sexual abuse cases, law enforcement must balance the special needs of often fragile victims with the burden of proof needed to establish facts, make arrests and successfully prosecute these criminals.

The first step in the investigation is getting the victim or someone who knows the victim to come forward. Much more — especially psychologically — goes into a criminal investigation of a sexual abuse complaint.

When a criminal sexual conduct (CSC) report is referred to the prosecutor's office, it is assigned to the appropriate law enforcement agency which will coordinate an on-scene and a medical examination of the victim. An interview follows.

With child victims, law enforcement agencies must follow a forensic interviewing protocol.

"In this county, we do multi-disciplinary team investigations that reduce the number of times a victim has to be interviewed," Mason County Sheriff Laude Hartrum said.

Kids' House, a part of the Andre Bosse Center, is a part of that investigative team.

"Most children do not disclose (sexual abuse) right away," said Cynthia Cole, program director and forensic interviewer at Kids House. "They're told it's a secret, it's something special, or the abuser said they'll hurt them if they tell."

To draw those details from the victims, the forensic interviewer performs a specific examination of the facts of the case as told from the child's point of view.

"I don't ask any leading questions - there is no suggestiveness," Cole said. "We have to be as precise as possible."

To get children to open up, Cole said she must first gain their trust as the interviewer.

"I talk a lot and try to do anything to get them to talk to me," Cole said.

Once they open up, she runs them through a series of questions to determine whether the child knows the difference between truth and lies, places, colors, body parts, and so on, all while using terms children use. She gets them to describe a "good touch" versus a "bad touch."

Once the child shows he or she can distinguish differences and trusts the interviewer, Cole said she starts to get details of the abuse. She said she allows the child to give his or her account, and then goes back over the story to gain the sequence and the necessary details for making a case.

"We want to come to a point where they're only telling their story once," Cole said. They don't the child to be re-victimized over and over again by having to recount the story several times.

That's why law enforcement monitors the forensic interviews — to cut down on the number of times the story has to be told.

The forensic interviewers — along with detectives from the Sheriff's Office — interview victims. The detectives do not have direct contact with the victim, but monitor the questioning.

“We monitor the interview and take notes, and try to get all the elements of the crime, if possible,” said Jordan Hartley, a detective with the Mason County Sheriff’s Office for 14 years. Instead of the child having to relive the traumatic experience for each interviewer, the detectives communicate questions to the interviewer via ear microphones to get the facts of the case from one interview.

More and more CSC cases are now involving DNA evidence that provides indisputable proof of the abuse in court, Hartley said.

“We always try to get DNA evidence if we can,” Hartley said.

But DNA evidence is only part of making a case in court, Hartrum acknowledged.

“In court, you want to overwhelm the offender with everything you know,” Hartrum said. “If the offender realizes you have a lot of information, they will likely plead out.”

If the victim’s story passes muster, the law enforcement agencies move forward with the investigation. Next, the detectives question any possible witnesses.

Finally, after gathering the information in the investigation, the officers interrogate the suspect. Usually, the person in question already knows why he or she is being interviewed, Hartley said. The key is to try to gain the suspect’s confidence and get him to tell his side of the story in the interview.

“If they think you’re judging them, that’s the end of the interview,” Hartley said. “You never tell them more than they think you have on them. You get everything you can get beforehand and then sit down and do the interrogation.

“And if they did it, when they talk to you, you’re going to know. I’ll know 99 times out of 100 if they did it or not. That doesn’t mean I can prove it, but I’ll know.”

Hartley looks for clues indicating guilt, but said he didn’t want to disclose specifically what those clues are.

Once the interview is completed, the detectives review all of the information pertinent to the case.

“At that point, the suspect may go in for a polygraph test, we may send the case to the prosecutor’s office for a warrant, or the case could be shelved as unfounded,” Hartrum said.

Burden is on victim in court

The prosecutor then reviews the case.

Law enforcement sends a report of their findings, and the prosecutor’s office must decide whether the case is sufficient.

“We look to see if there’s enough evidence to meet the statutes,” said Susan Kasley, Mason County Prosecutor. If the level of proof is met, she said the case proceeds to court.

Most cases, especially those without DNA evidence, wind up in court because the cases are based on one person’s word versus another person’s, Kasley said.

“When it’s one person’s word, most defendants take their chances at trial,” Kasley said. “My challenge is to get the jury to understand that the victim’s testimony is proof. It’s one of the biggest hurdles in the case.”

Pitting two people’s testimony against each other in sexual abuse cases is no different from many types of court cases, Kasley said, but the emotion inherent in sexual abuse trials adds a dimension to the case.

“Sex offender cases are emotionally difficult,” Kasley said. “It’s harder for the victim and the jurors in these cases. These types of things do happen in small towns.”

Ultimately, the success of the case comes back to the victim’s cooperation and ability to say what happened.

Kasley said she tries to prepare the victims as much as possible by taking them to through the courtroom and familiarizing them with the proceedings as much as possible.

“I try to get them to have some comfort level in court,” Kasley said.

Some victims just don’t want to go through with the process because of the pain of reliving their abuse.

“The biggest hurdle is the victim’s ability to tell their story in court,” Hartrum said. “There are some victims who have gone through the system more than once who think the cure is worse than the disease.”

“They’ll say ‘I don’t want it to happen anymore, but I don’t care if the guy goes to prison,’”

Hartley said. “The kids can be really, really messed up — they’ll never be normal functioning adults because of being victims of sexual abuse as kids.”

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THE TOUCH THAT HURTS: Survivors struggle with lifelong pain

Part III of a series

By **JOE BOOMGAARD**

Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

March 23, 2006

Sexual abuse survivors face a troubling fate.

If they tell their painful secrets and prosecute the abuser, they could be stigmatized as damaged goods and have to go through the ache of telling their story. If they don't tell what happened to them, they struggle with the inner demons forced upon them by the abuser, and the abuser remains free to again victimize them or others.

Robbed innocence

Sexual abusers effect life-altering change on their victims. For the survivors of sexual abuse, myriad emotions and fears make the abuse unspeakable. Some survivors eventually find their voice.

One mother of an abused child spoke with the Daily News on the condition she would remain anonymous.

Even though the abuse occurred more than two decades ago, affects of the abuse linger on for both mother and child.

To woman's ex-husband pleaded guilty to third degree criminal sexual conduct after years of sporadic, but nonetheless terrible abuse. He served time in prison, was released back into the community and lives minutes away from his victim. Because the incident took place before the sex offender registry law was passed in 1996, his name does not appear on any sex offender list.

After 25 years of learning to cope with the abuse, the mother and child have strong feelings. They hurt for each other and are angry the abuser now walks free, waiting for other opportunities to strike again, in their opinion.

"Intellectually, you can understand a lot of things, but emotionally — not so well," the mother said.

The mother still bears the emotional burden of not realizing the abuse occurred. She feels she let her child down by not protecting the child from the abuse.

"Why didn't I see it?" the mother said. "My ex-husband was the last person I would have thought of. You don't expect that kind of person is the one that you love and trust the most. It was something so bizarre to me. We're always supposed to tell children to protect themselves from strangers. You just don't look for it in the people that you trust. I didn't know I had to protect my child in my own home."

When her child revealed the abuse, she fell into a fit of disbelief and could not stop apologizing for "failing" her child.

"My ex-husband was a good member of community. By all appearances, nothing was wrong. Everything appeared average. You can't look at people and tell they're an abuser. There is no stereotype."

Abusers prey on children

The type of abuse in the child's case is not unusual. The most common victims of sexual abuse are minors.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 66.9 percent of victims of all reported sexual abuse are age 17 or younger. Only 7.4 percent of reported sexual abuse victims are older than 34 years old.

Kids' House, a part of the Andre Bosse Center in Ludington, deals with child victims of all kinds of abuse, not just sexual abuse. Nonetheless, the group sees nearly 500 cases of sexual abuse each year. Counselors there try to turn child victims of sexual abuse into survivors. The staff at the center promotes healing by providing a safe, caring environment.

"We try to feel comfortable, not official," said Marta Kistler, child advocate coordinator at Kids' House. She and the staff pool community resources to "offer services to the families to make the situation easier," she said.

The child-friendly milieu makes it easier for the abused to feel comfortable enough to tell their story.

Cynthia Cole, program director and forensic interviewer at Kids' House, said children have a difficult time talking about the abuse because it's often committed by someone they are taught to look up to and trust. There is no blanket description of a sexual abuser, she said.

Younger children also have the hardest time telling what happened to them.

"Older kids are clued in by preventative programs," Cole said. "They're not as naïve. But the younger kids don't tell for a long time. They're afraid their parents won't believe them or that they'll be mad at them."

Parents won't always see obvious signs of sexual abuse, according to Cole. Physical signs of sexual abuse only occur about 5 percent of the time. It's usually up to the child to reveal the abuse.

Once children open their doors, it's up to the forensic interviewer to make a case that will stand up in court. The forensic interview gleanes the information from the children and assesses the validity of the statements.

"If they can disclose the abuse and get it out, then they can put medication on it and start to heal," Cole said. "The child who was molested always knows what happened, and they need to get it out. It's not their fault. They're still OK; they're a good person; they're not dirty."

While getting the story out can be healthy, the setting in which it's told must be considered. Telling the story in front of an accuser in an open courtroom often proves difficult, as the mother found out.

In the first go-around in court for a hearing, the child took the stand, but “when it came to more intimate details,” her child “clammed up and wouldn’t talk.” The second time around, the mother worked with her child and told the child to look directly at her during the testimony — not at the prosecutor, not at the abuser, not at the attorneys. The child was able to testify enough that the father was charged. He pleaded guilty to “spare the family from embarrassment,” the mother said sarcastically. “By him going to jail, it showed the blame didn’t belong to my child,” the mother said. “The perpetrators need to have the blame put on them. It’s so important sexual abusers be prosecuted. The victims need to know it’s not their fault. The older they get, the more important that becomes.

“The victims don’t have to live as victims their whole lives, but the remnants of being the victim are there their whole lives. The trauma stays there.”

The healing process

Once the story is told, and perhaps after the court proceedings are over, children can begin to heal from the pain of the abuse.

Cole said many victims are reluctant to go to counseling, but they need “to put the abuse back here on the shelf. It’s always there, but they need to say ‘I’m done with it.’”

The mother said the counseling came many years later for her child. Although the child refused to talk about the abuse, the mother sought advice from a crisis counselor to learn how best to help her child heal.

“The counselor said at some point in time, my child was going to need counseling, but she felt that you don’t over-traumatize a child who’s been traumatized,” the mother said.

While her child coped “surprisingly well,” the mother said problems still existed. The child had a difficult time learning to trust peers and adults.

“My child’s been let down by a lot of people,” the mother said. “Friends’ parents wouldn’t let my child come over anymore after the abuse. After finding someone who my child thought was a great friend and told the story to, the friend blurted out the story in a classroom. That was a most traumatic thing.”

Shortly after the child told about the abuse, other problems arose when the child was sleeping.

“Waking my child up was a real challenge,” the mother said.

No one can touch the child to rouse the child from sleep. People were hit over the head with a clock or scratched trying to wake the child.

“There’s a terror in my child’s eyes — you don’t ever want to see that terror,” the mother said.

As a coping mechanism, mother and child have become devoted friends, an emotional support team.

“We depended on each other,” the mother said. “We were the only ones we trusted, and we learned not to talk about it with anyone but each other. It took years to put it on the back burner because we were so hurt by what happened. But we were there for each other emotionally.”

Just as the crisis counselor predicted, the child eventually sought counseling 20 years after the abuse and prospered since, according to the mother.

“You’d never guess what my child has gone through,” the mother said.

Emotional problems persist

Others abused children aren’t so lucky.

Cole said victims may be extremely compliant or aggressive following the abuse. Therapy and counseling combat these behaviors, Cole said.

Children are impressionable and willing to please, something playing into abusers’ desires. Some children think they must continue with behavior pleasing to the abuser even after the abuse stops, according to Cole.

The child is so inclined to act on the abuser’s urges that the child may not understand the nature of the action. The key, Cole said, is for caretakers to set boundaries.

Some victims go down the road of self-destructive behavior, according to Cole.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “Sexual violence can have very harmful and lasting consequences for victims, families and communities.”

Besides physical problems arising from sexual assault, victims can endure many psychological consequences.

The CDC lists immediate psychological consequences like shock, fear, denial, guilt and distrust, as well as chronic mental issues like depression, attempted or completed suicide, alienation, post-traumatic stress disorder, and unhealthy diet as resulting from sexual violence. Social relationships can also be strained.

Some research has shown sexual abuse victims exhibit risky, unhealthy behaviors like engaging in high-risk sexual behavior and using harmful substances including cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs.

Kids’ House tries to direct these victims and their families toward community resources such as counselors and parenting classes to prevent those problems. Kids’ House tries to help the healing process begin.

They help out with little things, too, like care packages and blankets for the children once they’ve told their stories in forensic interviews. The gifts act as rewards to reinforce positive behavior for telling the secrets, Cole said.

Pain lurks around every corner

The saga doesn’t end when the abusers get out of prison, the mother said.

Living in a small community, the child had a chance encounter with the abusive father 25 years after the abuse — after he had served prison time.

“He came up to my child and said he had no remorse,” the mother said. “People think that the prison system works. That says it does not.”

The accidental meeting led the mother to realize the painful events have the potential to continue even after the abuser goes to prison.

"People think it stops when they go to prison and get out," the mother said. "But the story doesn't stop there, not for the victims — maybe not for the molester."

The mother thinks the offenders should be treated like mentally ill patients who are not released into the community until officials are convinced the patients are not a danger to the community. In the mother's opinion, prison might not be the answer.

"They need treatment so intense that a prison setting is not going to be able to provide it," the mother said.

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843-1122, ext. 309

Girl uses gift to feed homeless

By: Michelle Swartz

story updated March 22, 2006 11:21AM

Alex Taylor didn't want the hottest new toy on the market or even a new bike.

Instead, the 8-year-old opted to use a gift of \$100 to help feed the homeless. With her parents footing the bill, she made a spaghetti dinner for about 20 men living in the Philadelphia House homeless shelter on Friday night.

"She's a very caring 8-year-old girl. She is always worrying about everyone else," said her mother, Jennifer Taylor of Monroe.

The idea to feed the homeless derived from a homework assignment from Katie Rebel, Alex's third-grade teacher at Custer Elementary School. She asked the class what they would do with \$100. In her essay, Alex wrote that she would use the money to buy food for the homeless shelter.

"We read her essay, and we decided to give her the money in order for her to do it," Mrs. Taylor explained. "We told her we were giving her the money because she was thinking of someone else first."

Along with her mother and other family members, Alex went grocery shopping and bought items for a spaghetti dinner. Her younger sister, Mikayla, made cupcakes for dessert.

"She had a blast. Now she wants to do it all the time," Mrs. Taylor said. "And all the guys thanked her for thinking of them instead of buying a toy. They told her that she was a special little girl."

Mel Nieswender, director at the men's homeless shelter, was pleased to see someone as young as Alex volunteering for the homeless.

"We will get a lot of grade-school students do things for us, like bringing in canned food or housewares, but nothing like this," he said of Alex's volunteer efforts. "We've never had someone her age help feed the homeless."

The men living at the shelter also appreciated the gesture.

"The guys really enjoyed it, too," he said. "They were quite moved someone that young wanted to help the homeless."

Alex is the daughter of Bill and Jennifer Taylor of Monroe.

City must seek solutions to homelessness

*Wednesday, March 22, 2006
Kalamazoo Gazette Editorial*

We can appreciate Kalamazoo City Commissioner Barbara Miller's concern about duplicating efforts to aid the homeless, especially with the county also trying to devise a plan to end homelessness in the next 10 years.

She was the lone dissenting vote on a city plan to assist the homeless, one that includes finding more affordable housing, providing short-term bus passes and possibly more public restrooms and secure storage.

We believe a countywide solution is appropriate, because the homeless come from everywhere -- Portage, Schoolcraft, Galesburg, Paw Paw -- not just the city of Kalamazoo.

But because southwestern Michigan's problem of homelessness is being borne largely by the city of Kalamazoo, it is important for the city to address the issue immediately.

And because homelessness disproportionately has an impact on downtown Kalamazoo, it is a matter of some urgency. No downtown revitalization plan can work well if this issue is pushed to the side.

So we support the City Commission's endorsement of a draft plan to combat homelessness.

It will consider short-term needs -- availability of public restrooms, storage, meals -- that are really only Band-aids to the problems that homeless people face.

It also will consider longer-term solutions, like increasing the amount of affordable housing, increasing access to the bus system and health care.

Too-expensive housing, an inability to get to and from a job, and no health care, including mental health care, are among the causes of homelessness.

It is important that any plan consider both the long-term causes of homelessness and the need for short-term assistance to deal with the problems faced by the homeless.

If only long-term solutions are addressed, perhaps a significant dent in homelessness would be achieved in 10 years, but those who are homeless here and now would continue to suffer.

If only short-term solutions are considered, then downtown Kalamazoo could indeed become the tent city Miller worries about. Yes, those without roofs over their heads will gravitate toward the communities that offer them help. And offering assistance to those with no homes is the humane thing to do.

But addressing the long-term causes of homelessness is also the smart thing to do, both for the homeless and the city.

That's one reason we were happy to hear that more federal housing funds are coming to Kalamazoo. Some of the money will help about 100 disabled people stay in their apartments. Some of the money will help house several dozen people who are homeless now. And some of the money will be spent on transitional housing for the homeless.

Low-income people who have places to call their own aren't likely to be spending their days on the street and their nights in the park.

That benefits both the homeless -- and everyone else who calls the city home.

Shelter's fate: Homeless day refuge needs steady source of funding

*A Lansing State Journal editorial
March 22, 2006*

The precarious life of a Lansing homeless shelter has been given yet another reprieve. It's an open question, though, how long the New Hope Shelter can continue its limbo-like existence. The good news, of course, is the Volunteers of America will be able to keep the day shelter open through June, thus avoiding a shutdown during the remainder of the cold-weather months.

U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, was the mastermind behind a \$15,000 check written to the VOA. Rogers persuaded businesses to donate the money. A military veteran, he takes a special interest in New Hope because it serves many veterans

Good show, Mr. Rogers.

The more troubling news is that New Hope needs a long-term fix. The VOA applied for \$250,000 in funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD has denied the request, but Rogers is asking HUD to reconsider.

Ironically, it's the federal government that thrust New Hope and similar programs into a fiscal crisis. A new law has slashed tax deductions on vehicles donated to nonprofits. Soon after the law took early last year, VOA vehicle donations fell by about 40 percent.

Congress needs to revisit this tax write-off, considering the great harm it's done to charities. Meanwhile, places like New Hope will plod on, living hand-to-mouth. There are an estimated 700 homeless people in the Lansing area, and they depend on a few places like New Hope to connect them to services such as skills training and health care. They're not going away. If anything, their numbers are increasing.

The shelter desperately needs a steady source of revenue. Since Congress had a hand in cutting off a major source, perhaps Rogers can convince his colleagues to come up with an alternative.

MIRS

March 22, 2006

Unemployment Rate Back Up To 6.6%

Michigan's unemployment rate for February was 6.6 percent, up from the 6.2 percent rate from January, but down from the Feb. 2005 rate of 7.0 percent.

Rich **WACLAWEK**, director of the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, cited layoffs from the manufacturing sector as part of the reason. From Feb. 2005 to Feb. 2006, the national unemployment rater fell by six-tenths of a percentage point, but was up one-tenth of a percentage point from a month ago.

Waclawek said unemployment lessened in Michigan by 17,000 or five percent. Nationwide, joblessness decreased 10 percent in the same period.

Michigan business

State jobless rate is back up

Manufacturing has most losses

March 23, 2006

BY JOHN GALLAGHER

Detroit Free Press

Fears that January's healthy drop in Michigan's unemployment rate might be too good to be true were confirmed Wednesday when the state reported that February's rate jumped back up. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased by 0.4 percentage point from January's 6.2% to 6.6% in February.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth blamed negative trends in the state's hard-hit factories for the bad news.

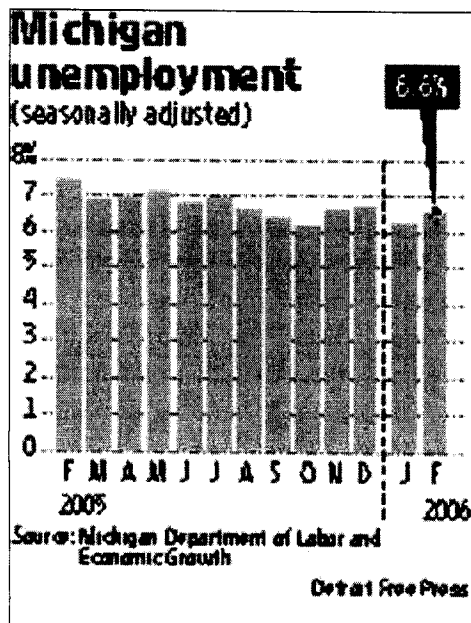
"Continued layoff activity in manufacturing impacted the state's jobless rate in February," said Rick Waclawek, director of the department's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

According to a monthly survey of the state's employers, Michigan shed 9,000 jobs in February to a total workforce of 4.36 million. Most of the losses came in the manufacturing sector, which lost 8,000 jobs.

A smaller drop was recorded in government, down 3,000 jobs. The losses were somewhat offset by a minor gain in leisure and hospitality services, which gained 2,000 jobs. All other major industry categories were little changed over the month. The national unemployment rate for February was 4.8%.

The rising jobless rate all but guarantees that Michigan is to remain among the states with the highest unemployment. The federal government is scheduled to release a compilation of state jobless rates later in the month.

Contact **JOHN GALLAGHER** at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com.



Gongwer
March 22, 2006

IDLED WORKER RATE JUMPS IN FEB.; **STATE LOSES 11,000 JOBS**

With state employers shedding 9,000 payroll jobs, the state's unemployment rate jumped by .4 percentage point in February, to 6.6 percent. The monthly report by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth reflected a widening gap between the state rate and the national average, which increased by .1 percentage point to 4.8 percent.

State-by-state comparisons for February will not be available until the end of the month, but Michigan's 6.2 percent rate in January put it in a tie for 47th place with South Carolina.

The department noted that the rate is a .4 percentage point improvement from a year ago, when Michigan recorded a 7 percent unemployment rate, though the national average dropped slightly more, improving by .6 percentage point. It said the number of idled jobseekers dropped compared to a year ago by 17,000, or 5 percent, compared to 10 percent nationally.

"Continued layoff activity in manufacturing impacted the state's jobless rate in February," Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, said.

The trend was better in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metropolitan statistical area, which saw its unemployment rate drop by .2 percentage point to 6.7 percent compared to January, as the area added 5,000 jobs.

The statewide survey of employers showed manufacturing jobs dropped for the third consecutive month, as another 8,000 positions were eliminated. That brings to 21,000 the number of manufacturing job losses since November. Government employment dropped over the month by another 3,000, although leisure and hospitality services added 2,000 jobs.

Melinda Haus: Single point of entry is must for Michigan

Opinion/Lansing State Journal
March 23, 2006

When it comes to long-term care options, older adults enter a maze that can often be impossible to escape. The current long-term care system is fragmented and disjointed, with many public and private programs and services - personal care, self-directed care, homemaker, assistive devices, home adaptations, home delivered meals, chore services, respite services, transportation, assisted living, nursing home care ... the list goes on.

To make it even more confusing, these programs and services are delivered by a large array of agencies and organizations. Older adults themselves sometimes have to navigate a system that requires them to coordinate several disparate financing and delivery systems.

This can cause major confusion for older adults and family members, leaving them unaware of many of their options and unable to make an informed choice about their long-term care services.

So you may ask how do we provide them the information they need? It's simple - create Single Points of Entry (SPE).

A SPE is a system that enables consumers to access long-term and supportive services through one agency or organization. SPEs perform several functions, including:

- Providing consumers with information on and referral to all long-term care options, services, and supports.
- Facilitating movement between supports, services, and settings.
- Assisting consumers in obtaining a financial determination of eligibility for publicly funded long-term care programs.
- Assisting consumers in developing their long-term care support plans through a person-centered planning process.
- Re-evaluating consumers' need and eligibility for long-term care services on a regular basis.
- Working with consumers and community settings to assure they are presented with a full array of long-term care options.

Currently, 32 states and the District of Columbia are operating 43 SPEs across the nation, but Michigan has yet to jump on the SPE bandwagon. However, House Bill 5389 has been introduced. This legislation would promote and establish Single Point of Entry services in Michigan. The bill was referred to the Committee on Senior Health, Security, and Retirement and will be voted on soon. It is imperative that older adults have information regarding all long-term care options that are available to them. This allows them to make an informed choice - a choice that reflects their wants and needs.

Older adults should be in charge of their lives - in charge of how they spend their older years. The establishment of SPEs will give them the information needed and allow older adults to choose the long-term care services they desire. Michigan is behind the times and it is about time they get up to speed. SPEs in Michigan are a must!

Older adults have contributed so much to society. They have raised us. They have tended to our needs for years. They have laid the foundation for what is to come. They, of all people, deserve the long-term care services of their choice.

Do what is right and support HB 5389. They have earned it!

Nation Briefs

Detroit News
March 23, 2006

Fewer doctors provide charity care

WASHINGTON -- The percentage of doctors who provide free care to the poor has dropped over the past decade, signaling a growing problem for the uninsured, a survey suggests. About three-quarters of physicians provided charity care in the mid-1990s, compared with about two-thirds now, according to a study being released today by the Center for Studying Health System Change. The numbers have declined across all major specialties.

Attorney: Use juvenile system for rape suspect

14-year-old accused of raping girl in church bathroom charged as adult

PUBLISHED: March 23, 2006

By Jameson Cook

Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A court battle is brewing over whether a 14-year-old boy accused of raping a 12-year-old girl will be sentenced as an adult, forcing him to spend time in adult jail or prison.

The attorney for Joshua Terry Owens of Warren, charged in adult court with raping the girl in a bathroom at a Warren church, said Wednesday he would like to see his client handled in the juvenile system, where he would receive better rehabilitation opportunities.

"The juvenile system is in the better position to rehabilitate an offender," attorney Antonio Tuddles said following a pretrial hearing in Macomb County Circuit Court. "Why subject him to a system that has nothing to do with rehabilitation, even though it's supposed to?"

Owens' hearing in front of Judge Matthew Switalski was delayed Wednesday because test results on DNA evidence have not yet been received. Attorneys and the judge agreed to request that the evidence be put on the "fast track" for testing through Michigan State Police.

Owens allegedly raped the girl Dec. 19 after both had attended a play at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, located near Nine Mile Road and Van Dyke.

Owens also is charged separately in juvenile court with fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct for a September assault of another girl in a bathroom at Lincoln Middle School, where both attended. He was expelled from the Warren school and placed in an alternative public school. Proceedings in that case also were put on hold.

Assistant Macomb prosecutor Molly Zappitell and Tuddles said plea negotiations are taking place to possibly resolve the case without having to force the young defendant and victim to go through a trial. Zappitell said there may be a "blended disposition" in which Owens' sentence would contain a combination of elements of a juvenile and adult sentence. An adult record would stay on his criminal record into adulthood.

But Tuddles said he opposes that resolution because he said Owens belongs in juvenile jurisdiction where he can receive more counseling and other assistance. In the juvenile system, he could be held up to age 21.

"We're trying to stay clear of a blended sentence," Tuddles said. "We want him sentenced as a juvenile." He said he would like to see a change in the state law that automatically allows prosecutors to charge juvenile offenders for offenses carrying life sentences.

"It takes away the discretion" of a judge, he said.

Tuddles acknowledged that "everything is in negotiation right now" so could not speculate on the outcome.

"It probably will not go to trial," he said.

Owens is being held in the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center in lieu of a \$100,000 bond. Tuddles' request to allow Owens to visit his home for two hours each weekend was denied by Switalski, although the judge said he will review the request again and ask for input from a probation officer. An officer had not yet been assigned to Owens, officials said.

In arguing against the home visitation, Zappitell said that Owens' family can visit him in the center. She also noted that in the September incident at Lincoln school, the victim had to bite Owens to "get away" after he started touching her breasts.

Tuddles said Owens needs to have home contact with his family to prepare him for when he "gets back in the community."

Gongwer
March 22, 2006

FIRE BILLS WIN UNANIMOUS HOUSE PANEL OK

Passing legislation out of the House Appropriations Committee on a unanimous basis doesn't come around often, but on Wednesday, the unified consent of the panel members was in abundance with the passage of a 12 bills aimed at streamlining fire services and policies under a new Bureau of Fire Services within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

The package, HB 5860, HB 5861, HB 5862, HB 5863, HB 5864, HB 5865, HB 5866, HB 5867, HB 5868, HB 5869, HB 5870, and HB 5871, was introduced with bipartisan and bicameral support, with similar bills in the Senate.

Generally, the legislation puts into statute Governor Jennifer Granholm's Executive Order 2003-1, which transferred duties of the fire marshal division of the Department of State Police to DLEG. While all duties and responsibilities transfer over to the new department, arson investigators still will be under the State Police.

Rep. Gino Polidori (D-Dearborn), a retired fire chief, said the legislation is long overdue and that bringing all the divisions and policies under one roof makes sense.

Also during the committee meeting, the panel unanimously passed transfer of funding for the Department of Human Services to provide 50 percent of the cost associated with hiring 51 additional Child Protective Services workers. The remaining 50 percent of costs was covered by a supplemental budget bill (SB 242), which was passed by the House last week.

Governor Granholm: Senate Joins House in Failing to Protect Michigan Families

March 22, 2006

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today said again that she would be willing to eliminate the Single Business Tax (SBT) if, and only if, doing so does not lead to higher taxes on Michigan families or deep cuts in critical health care, education, or public safety services.

Granholm restated her commitment while expressing disappointment that the Republican-led state Senate refused to support Democratic amendments to a bill eliminating the SBT, which would have guaranteed a revenue neutral plan that included no tax increase on families and no cuts in vital services. Granholm said she would sign a bill to eliminate the SBT if it contained such guarantees.

“Republicans made clear today that they intend to raise taxes for Michigan families by \$800 or gut education, health care, and public safety in order to finance a tax cut for business,” Granholm said. “It’s disappointing that Senate Republicans chose not to protect Michigan families and the services they need.”

Granholm noted that more than a year ago, she offered Michigan businesses a fair and responsible plan for cutting taxes without shifting the burden of paying for essential government services to our families.

“Our plan was revenue neutral and would not raise taxes on Michigan families nor force draconian cuts in education, health care, and public safety,” Granholm said. “The vote today made clear the differences between us.”

Granholm’s comments followed a largely-partisan vote in the state Senate on House Bill 5743 which would eliminate the state’s business tax on December 31, 2007. The state House of Representatives passed the legislation last week.

“As I talk to business leaders, urging them to create jobs here, it’s become clear that we will grow our economy only if we adopt responsible corporate tax policies that allow us to hold down taxes on individuals while also improving education, providing adequate health care and insuring public safety,” Granholm said. “This legislation, without the amendments proposed by Senate Democrats fails to meet that standard.”

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